

Kuapa Kokoo: good cocoa farmers

The farmers featured on this site are members of the Kuapa Kokoo co-operative, an association of cocoa farmers in Ghana set up to develop fairer trading practices and represent the interests of cocoa farmers. Kuapa Kokoo means 'good cocoa farmer' in the Twi language. Their motto is 'Pa pa paa' which means 'best of the best' in Twi.

What is a co-operative?

A co-operative is a business owned and governed democratically and directly by farmers themselves. Decisions are based on how the co-operative's resources can best be used to improve the lives of each family and the community as a whole.

Co-ops help farmers to work together, giving them the strength to compete in the market. They also offer community services like healthcare, education, public transport and, most importantly, they give farmers the pride and dignity to create a better life. Farmers are members of village societies who sell their cocoa through the trading arm of Kuapa Kokoo to the government cocoa board. Kuapa Kokoo is able to get their members a better deal on all of their cocoa, but they particularly benefit when their cocoa is sold on Fairtrade terms.

Although all their cocoa meets the required Fairtrade standard, Kuapa Kokoo is not able to sell all of it to the Fairtrade market. This is because there is not yet enough demand from consumers, although demand is growing year by year. More shops will stock Fairtrade chocolate and more chocolate companies will make it, if people show that they will buy it. The farmers split the extra money earned through Fairtrade terms between their 45,000 farmer members and their families.

Comic Relief's Pa Pa Paa online is all about creating more demand for fairly traded chocolate, so that Kuapa Kokoo and other small-scale producer organisations can sell more of their produce into the market on fairer terms of trade.

What does Kuapa Kokoo mean for the cocoa farmers?

To become a member a farmer must apply, then pay a membership fee. There are lots of benefits to belonging:

- Kuapa Kokoo earns a minimum of \$2000 per tonne for its members' beans when they're sold abroad to Fairtrade companies. When they sell to conventional companies, they will be paid the market price, which goes up and down and has been as low as \$672 (2000 figure from icco.org).
- Kuapa gets an extra \$200 per tonne from Fairtrade sales for community projects to help farmers, such as clean water wells and better toilets
- Kuapa farmers receive more of the money paid for their cocoa by buyers in other countries, as less goes to other companies in the cocoa trading chain.
- All Kuapa farmers get a share of the profits at the end of each season for personal and community use
- Kuapa pays farmers fairly, promptly and in a way they can get the cash easily
- Kuapa offers training in quality control, record keeping and management
- Being part of Kuapa means being part of a community working together
- All Kuapa farmers have a say in how the whole co-operative is run

The Fairtrade Mark

The Fairtrade Mark is an independent consumer label, which appears on products as a guarantee that farmers and producers in the developing world get a better deal. It is awarded by the Fairtrade Foundation.

When you buy a Fairtrade product like a chocolate bar or banana you can be sure that farmers or workers in the developing world who helped to make it were paid a fairer price, worked in decent conditions, and weren't exploited or mistreated – which is, of course, nice to know!

Dubble deal

Chocolate made with Kuapa Kokoo cocoa qualifies for the Fairtrade Mark. The farmers supply the cocoa for Dubble and Divine chocolate and own a 45% share in Divine Chocolate. This means farmers have a real say in how Divine is run and benefit from a share of the profits.

Good shopping

You may be surprised how many fair trade items are also now available. There's chocolate, of course, but also cotton from Mali, footballs from Pakistan, coffee from Peru, teas from Uganda, bananas from the Windward Islands, to name but a few.

To see an up-to-date list of Fairtrade products available in the shops, visit www.fairtrade.org.uk/products.htm